

# The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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edited by PETER HUGH REED  
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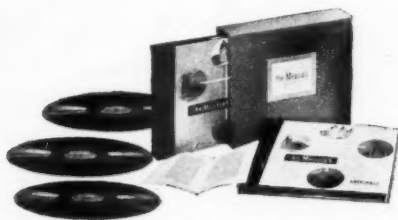


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# The American RECORD GUIDE

March 1947    ▲    Vol. XIII, No. 7

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March, 1947

## Editorial Notes

"If anyone doubts that the record com-  
panies are not big business, operating on a  
keenly competitive basis," writes a New  
York reader, "the latest behind-the-scenes  
battle for the rights of recording operas  
from the Metropolitan Opera should dis-  
perse any illusions of the record companies  
being primarily concerned with art values  
before business ones. An exclusive con-  
tract by one company for this right cannot  
assure an interested public in the best ar-  
tistic ensembles because the artists are under  
contract to one or another company and it  
remains doubtful if the loan of an artist  
from one company to another will take  
place.

"What should have happened was both  
Columbia and Victor should have been given  
similar opportunities, but this probably would  
have resulted in arguments as to which opera  
would go to whom, and the Metropolitan  
Opera would have been placed in a disad-  
vantageous position to decide the issue."

The above comments from a long letter  
pretty well sum up our feelings in the matter.  
It is our opinion that neither Columbia nor  
Victor is completely in the right in their  
competitive statements regarding opera re-  
cordings. It remains to be seen whether re-  
corded performances from the stage of the  
Metropolitan Opera House will be regarded  
as events "of considerable musical impor-  
tance". Let us not delude ourselves, many  
performances from the Metropolitan Opera  
House via the airways in recent years, have  
been decidedly second-rate ones, and those  
of us who have known the Metropolitan in  
its hey-day feel that few performances in  
modern times equal what was formerly heard  
in that edifice. But opera goes on and the  
clever publicity of modern times still builds  
up the Metropolitan as the opera house *par*

without excitement; he awakens memory, not desire; he gathers the harvest of romance rather than sows the seeds—which most of all renders him the aptest company for us on our desert island where, I take it, passion will be best recollected in tranquillity.

Brahms achieved a masterpiece in nearly every form of music; one exception was opera—and as on desert islands the chances of hearing opera are likely to be as rare as in all the by no means deserted islands of the British Empire, we shall not on one account wish we had brought some other composer with us instead of Johannes. He will not appeal to the forward-reaching mind, maybe—if in these days any being in the prime of his faculties would wish to indulge in what we once confidently called progress; here again, though, Brahms would suffer no shortcomings as our one and only source of music on an uncharted coral strand; we may all become our own atonalists whenever we will. If we should wish to hear chamber music, there is a masterpiece by Brahms in most of the known instrumental combinations, including one or two without a peer: the clarinet quintet, for instance.

#### His Violin Works

The violin concerto is one of the few works which no fiddler dare leave alone if he would convince the world of his rank. The three violin sonatas of Brahms have not been surpassed for variety of style and rich and happy marriage of the two instruments. In the Opp. 116, 117, 118, Brahms contributed to the literature of the piano as importantly and as originally as Schumann, to say the least. The vocalist who ignored the world of the Brahms Lieder would expose both his ignorance and poverty; here our composer is with Schubert, Wolf, and Schumann, if he is not as great as two of these as a maker of German song. His four symphonies have been accepted by the majority of cultured and experienced musicians throughout the world and over a long period as amongst the permanent peaks in the great range of symphonic music. The pianist who wishes to satisfy us that he is built in the big mould must sooner or later face the challenge of the two concertos of Brahms. In variation-form, Brahms has not been ex-

celled for fancifulness and ripeness of technique. He will feed middle-aged philosophy with his 'Vier Ernste Gesänge', and his 'Requiem' and 'Alto Rhapsody', just as readily as in the 'Liebeslieder' waltzes he will compel an avuncular Rückblick on old delights long since packed away in the lavender cupboard of our days. Brahms wrote as little insignificant music as anybody who, having been tenanted by genius, was obliged to write a good deal. I hold to the opinion that only the small and second-rate artist is meagre of output. Brahms destroyed many of his works, so critical was he of his own efforts; yet he left behind a body of composition which if we should be unable to escape from, or if we should prefer to remain on our desert island for ever, would keep us in touch with the art in most of its vital aspects; indeed Brahms provides us with a very Anatomy of Music, and at the same time breathes into it the breath of a full man who worked in a rich field and period.

#### II

In the strange history of the life and survival of critical opinions the music of Brahms occupies an ironical chapter. Most writers on music must at nights see passing before them a dreadful array of pitiful ghosts of statements and judgments once born of vigorous pens and sent belligerently kicking into the world; now they pass in hideous cavalcade, like the midnight review before Richard III. When I was a boy, Brahms was accepted as the last word in classical complexity and profundity; not only had he been hailed by Hans von Bülow as one of the 'three Bs' of music; none other than Ernest Newman had written of the 'colossal intellect' functioning behind the B flat piano concerto; and he, the same Mr. Newman—who now would scarcely praise Brahms for fundamental brainwork—quoted with approval Sir Hubert Parry's fantastical description of the Variations on a Theme of Haydn—'His (Brahms's) principles are in the main those of Beethoven, while he applies such devices as condensation of groups of chords, anticipations, inversions, analogues, sophistications by means of chromatic passing notes, etc.' [that 'etc.' is good], 'with an elaborate but fluent ingenuity

which sometimes make the tracing of a theme in a variation quite a difficult intellectual exercise.' Mr. Newman went on to state that Brahms's 'aloofness from other men', 'his austerity' were never more clearly shown than in the 'St. Antoni' variations.

### Strange Critical Advice

I remember reading these forbidding remarks of Sir Hubert and Newman in an analytical note of a programme of a Hallé concert in Manchester, which I attended when I was very young. Newman was then the music critic of the *Manchester Guardian*; and what he said or wrote was accepted by all of us (or nearly all) as holy writ. I also remember the guilty feeling which came over me, after I had worked myself up into the state of cerebration deemed suitable by these two mentors for a proper appreciation of the 'St. Antoni' variations: so far from finding anything intellectual about the music, I blasphemously enjoyed the entrancing rhythm, the gracious melody, the sturdy elbowing movement onward; and at last the golden opening out of the finale, burgeoning as a sunrise on a full sea. I was not a precocious boy, and not at all schooled in composition. Next day I spoke of my enjoyment of Brahms to Dr. Brodsky, who at the time was principal of the College of Music in Manchester; Brodsky had long ago known Brahms, and had played the violin concerto with the composer conducting. Even Brodsky seemed a little taken aback that a novice should have found Brahms so easy: 'You should *admire* Brahms, my boy,' he said; 'but not already is it that you can enjoy him.' I suppose that I, like other young folk of my own age in those days, had not been scientifically prepared for the right approach to Brahms. I knew only of the thrill I experienced whenever I heard 'Wie bist du, meine Königin'; I knew only of the wave of happiness that flooded me whenever I heard the beginning of the A major violin sonata, and the piano played its first solo chorded song, with its extended and rocking arpeggios; I knew only of the rapt spell that seemed to hold me in suspense as the music of 'Feldeinsamkeit' spun its magic of noon-day heat and quietude. I knew only of the twilight grove of the second movement of the violin concerto; and when I heard Elena Gerhardt sing 'Das Mädchen

spricht' I was almost forced to the conclusion that there must be two Brahms and that I had been listening to the wrong and inferior, because melodious, one. And so persistently do first lessons and ideas tyrannize, so difficult is it to fight against established judgements, that though early in life I found myself on the true track of Brahms the romantic and humanist, not until many years passed by was I able to penetrate the gloom in which the D minor piano concerto had been enveloped; then I discovered that even here was a warmth and graciousness of song and harmony which, once in the heart, stays there for good and all. Brahms was himself responsible no doubt for the unfriendly first aspect put forth by this concerto. The first movement, originally intended as a symphonic first movement expressing sorrow at the news of Schumann's attempted suicide, is for a while the music of impotence; it takes its birth from a chilly pit of orchestration; Brahms writes low-pitched notes for nearly all the instruments; we feel that not yet has he learned to understand how to write for them. But after the piano has played the second subject, and we have heard it taken up by the strings with the most gorgeous decorations by the piano—then we know—or we should know—that Brahms has expelled grief from his concerto. It is in fact, one of the most genial concertos of all in its quick movements; and the slow movement reveals Brahms at his most lovably tender and reflective—and as an artist in the orchestral *diminuendo*.

### A Passing Legend

To-day the legend of the austerity of Brahms is passing; and another is taking its place, as different and as misleading. This latest legend would persuade us that Brahms, so far from having possessed an intellect capable of grasping large musical forms, was really incapable of composing at all in bulk, but was a miniaturist, a meanderer, reduced to all sorts of reach-me-down shifts in his development-sections—a sort of cobbler of the symphony. In a recent essay on Sibelius, Mr. Newmann quotes with a show of approval Wagner's opinion that much of Brahms is 'mere note-spinning, according to rule, a mere filling-in of a conventional mould, the mere elaboration of a trans-

mitted pattern'. Brahms, like one or two other composers, was at times compelled to eke out a symphonic development-section by reach-me-down formulae. But this kind of patchwork would not necessarily have been avoided by rejection of a 'transmitted pattern'. I do not quite see how any great artist, with something to say, can altogether neglect transmitted patterns or forms. Mr. Newman himself has argued in his book *A Music Critic's Holiday*, that 'one of the laws of progress in music seems to be that it comes about, at first, largely through the activity of men of the second rank; the men of the first rank have, in the first place, a great deal to express, and in the second place know instinctively that it can be expressed only in a language that is already, as the result of long evolution, copious and flexible'. Again: 'In our own day any musician of intelligence would shrink from the task of trying to make a completely new symphonic structure of the size and scope of the old; he would know that to build on that scale one has to take over, in music as in architecture, the accumulated knowledge and skill and much of the material of preceding generations.' True. Very true. Mr. Pecksniff was sensible, when, by adding a doorstep, he made Martin Chuzzlewit's grammar school his own; suppose he had not started from a transmitted pattern? He would not have got as far as the doorstep. When in a symphonic passage Brahms is reduced to padding or to mechanical exploitation of scholarship; when his music is too obviously *durchkomponiert*, we need not drag in 'transmitted patterns' to account for the trouble; a momentary weakening of inspiration will explain everything.

#### Emotions and the Critic

In recent years criticism has tended too much to consider music in terms of form, or as the cant phrase has it, 'physiology'. The reaction against romanticism has been responsible for the fact that nowadays critics are afraid of emotional connotations in their writings. They discuss a musical score as though it were an architect's blue-print; they affect to devote more attention to the ground-plan of the symphonic edifice than to the spirit dwelling therein. Music, we are bidden, must be listened to *qua* music;

pressions in our minds—which is equivalent to telling the young lover that he that is, without 'extraneous' ideas or im-should look at the starlit sky *qua* astronomy, or at his beloved *qua* anatomy. The first attribute of genius is, as Arnold Bennett writes somewhere, 'fineness of mind'. Above all, 'the artist's mind must be permeated and controlled by common sense. But he must be able to conceive the ideal without losing sight of the fact that it is a human world we live in, and his mind must have the quality of being noble'. Bennett might well have been describing Brahms; for if ever a composer was noble, humane, and permeated and controlled with common sense, it was Brahms. Granted that here and there he succumbed to the temptation to compose a bridge-passage by the book of arithmetic, does anybody suggest that he for a moment expressed or gave evidence of indolence, lack of the artist's conscience, or meanness or any smallness whatever? Form in music, I repeat, cannot be considered in the abstract; form in music is expression. No composer has so far solved the problem of a form and sequence of music which shall develop with each and every note or phrase born of each and every preceding note or phrase, a form containing no lacunae, a form which is forgetive (in Falstaff's term) in every part, and every part essential to the vitality of the others. Music, unlike the sister arts, must live much on itself; it is the divine spider. The poet and painter and novelist can turn to life and the external universe for substance and shape; even the poet, who approaches nearest to the composer's 'intense inane'<sup>1</sup> is free, whenever rhythm and 'pure poetry' are failing him, to draw on the support of the association-value of words. Music must weave its golden ladder strand by strand; the composer, in fact, is the Indian rope-climber of the arts; Brahms was not one of the light weights amongst composers, so it was inevitable from time to time he should come down to earth with a bump.

#### A Blend of Styles

Nearly every instance in Brahms of an excrescence in the shape of a superfluous con-

<sup>1</sup>I had better point out that I use 'inane' in the Matthew Arnold-Shelley sense, denoting a void, with no 'silly' connotation whatever.

vention that gets in the way can be explained in terms of the nature of the materials of symphonic music as they existed when Brahms began to work in them. It is not generally realized that Brahms was the first composer to achieve a synthesis of the classical and romantic styles; he was the offspring of Beethoven and Schubert. In Brahms the Lied has grown up to a symphony; also, the classical instrumental patterns or forms are enriched by romantic melody and cadence. Brahms restored to music the ethic and heroic austerity from which it turned or withdrew during the first flush of the romantic movement; and to the single-minded heroic and moral tone of Beethoven, Brahms lent the impulse of lyrical feeling. He matured romance by a classical seriousness of mind; and to song he added the classical instrumental technique. The formal weaknesses in Brahms—and they have been grossly exaggerated—sprang from a clash of the two styles, freshly mated; in places we feel that Brahms is clogging the romantic impulse by a conscientious design derived from the traditional patterns; in other places we feel that the romantic impulse is taking too modest, easy and narrow a course to fill the varied and spacious classical channels. The chamber-music of Brahms reveals a number of examples of the classic imposing his will and knowledge on the reluctant romantic; and in the third movement of the Third Symphony there is an obvious case of a symphonic tailor patching a pretty folk-song garment with material taken from the gown of the scholar. These lapses from a firm natural binding together of the classical and romantic sheaves were inevitable; as I say, they were inherent in the materials Brahms harvested; but they count for so little amongst his bounty that we are at liberty to emulate the Scottish preacher who said: 'And now, brethren, we come to a deeficult passage, and having looked it boldly in the face, we will pass on.' I do not believe that Brahms 'boldly passed on' more difficulties in symphonic logic than other masters of music, whose 'continuous logic' is quoted to us so frequently as a model; the wonder is that in building the bridge from classicism to a mature romanticism he used as few props and stays as he did. It is certainly odd that the high priests of Wagnerism have

preferred Bruckner as a symphonist to Brahms—the same Wagnerites who swear by the Master's theory of music as an art of transition, a continuous web of tone unfolded from its own inner loom. There is, of course, no continuous tissue at all in Bruckner's music, no subtlety of transition. Bruckner when he comes to the end of an episode simply pauses, then begins again. You can see him pulling out a new stop on his organ of an orchestra. There are noble ideas in Bruckner and little inner and inevitable growth. But he used the Wagner tubas; that apparently was enough to render him liable to more or less military service in the great war against Brahms—poor Anton who loved God, and never wished to offend the smallest of his creatures.

### On Symphonic Form

The problem of symphonic form cannot be solved *a priori*; each artist must and will find his own way. I cannot agree with Mr. Newman that this problem in the main is one of an 'insensible merging of one bar into another throughout the entire work'. The one-movement-continuous-tissue symphony will no doubt suit and satisfy one type of creative musical mind; others will as certainly prefer the stronger contrasts of the symphony in two and more movements. It is not as certain as the Wagnerites seem to imagine that the music of the future will perpetually observe the method of imperceptible development; there are and always will be artists who revel in traditional forms or conventions for the sake of shaping or adapting them to a new material. There are even artists who, having looked the 'deeficulty' of a transmitted pattern boldly in the face, prefer not to pass it by but to enjoy a struggle with the intractable circumstances of their art. The poet is not reduced to impatience by the artificialities of the sonnet-form. I suggest it was not Brahms who, having looked the difficulties of symphonic form boldly in the face passed them by; rather I submit that it is in the Seventh symphony of Sibelius that we can find a 'classic' evasion of the problem at issue—how to compose a symphony which though it dispenses with the older divisions and

\*Ten composers (Jonathan Cape, Ltd., London, 1945).

compartments and repetitions and bridge-passages and so on, will none the less be at once recognized as a symphony. In the Seventh symphony, Sibelius telescopes the divisions and reduces his material to a basic theme or two—not so much themes as nuclei of notes; in other words, he condenses symphonic syntax and logic. But as I point out in the chapter on Sibelius in my book\*, there are four movements to be discerned in the Seventh symphony. Single-movement form and continuous tissue are achieved by Sibelius at the cost of that freedom of expansion, with unity in variety, which is the mark of the symphonic style. If you talk to me of a symphony of constricted and taciturn and not expansive music, I shall understand you no more than if you talk of a constricted and taciturn and not expansive epic. The fact is, as I see it, that the quality or condition of the symphonic style does not depend on a form but on a mode of feeling. Just as the term epic does not nowadays necessarily mean a verse-form, so has the term symphonic come to have a broader than strictly musical significance. We are free to speak of a symphonic sunset; or of a symphonic novel—Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for example. The essence of a symphonic style is its gradual, unhurried and inevitable expansion, a movement and growth from seeds that produce the tree. The 'Scotch' symphony of Mendelssohn is not symphonic—James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for all its enormous size, is not symphonic; it does not expand; it merely analyses moments of time, isolated experiences. The quality of being symphonic does not of course depend on bulk or duration but on power—power that expands, achieves an arch, and contains its end in its beginning. But if the symphonic style does not depend on bulk and duration it certainly has nothing to do with economy and sparseness. I cannot imagine a small one-track-minded symphony. The symphonic style, in a word, is the man himself; if he has amplexness and richness and variety of mind and nature, then he is a symphonic man, and if he be a composer he will most certainly write symphonies, to whatever shape or design he inclines, new or old. If ever there was a symphonic man it was Johannes Brahms.

(To be Continued)

## BOOK REVIEW

HAYDN: A CREATIVE LIFE IN MUSIC,  
by Karl Geiringer. New York, 1946,  
W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 342 pp.  
Price \$5.00.

▲ It is one of music's ironies that the greater esteem in which Joseph Haydn is held in any particular era, the less literature concerning his art appears in print. During the 19th and early 20th centuries Haydn, while generally considered among the dozen or so "immortals", was to a certain extent treated in a somewhat patronizing manner. He was called "Papa Haydn" and in certain circles his music was considered too simple and childlike for ears attuned to the *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Tristan* or *Ein Heldenleben*. Although several short books on Haydn appeared in the first part of the 19th century, the only comprehensive (if incomplete) biography, that by Carl Ferdinand Pohl, was not published until 1875, and subsequent biographies were largely based on his researches. We have had to wait more than seventy years for a book in English which is not only a masterpiece of biography, but which assumes a critical attitude towards Haydn's music that is in line with recent thought. Nowadays we recognize that Haydn was not merely a light-hearted predecessor of Mozart and Beethoven, but was a composer who expressed deeply-felt emotions in his music, even if these are superficially not evident to wallowers in Wagner and Tchaikovsky.

As research concerning Haydn has grown tremendously in the past half-century, this book fills a hiatus of long standing, as it contains many biographical facts unknown to Pohl. Geiringer, formerly curator of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna, is the logical author for this book, as this institution has proved the fountainhead of many facts of Haydn's life hitherto inaccessible to the musical public. Geiringer divides his book into two parts: the life and the works, the latter being treated chronologically. The author divides Haydn's creative life into five periods, more or less arbitrarily (and for no good reason as far as this reviewer can see except for the convenience of divid-

(Continued from page 221)



## RECORD NOTES AND

# REVIEWS

### Orchestra

FALLA: *El Amor Brujo*; played by the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra, with Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano) direction of Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M-or DM-1089, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ The recent release by Decca of the late Argentinita's version of Falla's ballet may well have prepared a public for this far more imposing set. The Decca records are, of course, really more of a memorial to a charming artist than a fair representation of this subtle and engaging music. *El Amor Brujo* was composed for Pastora Imperio, who like La Argentinita could sing as well as dance. The plot of the ballet is based on a folk tale which the dancer had from her gypsy mother; it tells of the devices resorted to by a young man in freeing his innamorata from the ghost of her departed former lover who has continually come between them. For this fantastic and rather different story Falla has written some of his finest music. Always the master who could

combine Spanish color with the utmost in good taste and refinement, he here produced a particularly attractive score.

Mr. Stokowski has a real genius for bringing out of an orchestra the best tone that is in it, and of making colorful music to sound. The section called *El Circulo Magico* is breathtakingly soft and lovely under his hands, and for sheerly beautiful orchestral sound the *Pantomime*, with its 7-8 rhythm, would be hard to match. The familiar *Ritual Fire Dance* and *Dance of Terror* also are genuinely effective in their way. The reproduction range is wide, and the dynamic contrasts impressive without being overdone. Nan Merriman was a good choice as soloist, for she has strong chest tones, and sounds properly Spanish.

A real gap in the recorded repertoire has been filled with this set, as none of the earlier versions could any longer be called modern. A word of thanks should be added for the facts that the texts of the songs are printed on the inside of the album covers, along with David Hall's informative notes.

—P.L.M.

**PISTON:** *Prelude and Allegro*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, E. Power Biggs (organ), direction of Serge Koussevitzky. Victor disc. 11-9262, price \$1.00.

▲ This is a neo-classical work written by one of America's foremost musical scholars. The *Prelude* has poetic sensitivity and fine feeling, and Mr. Biggs plays the organ part with appreciable artistic sensibility. Piston has created a lovely mood with the entrance of strings and Dr. Koussevitzky with a knowing hand makes the most of the occasion. The *Allegro* seems more purposely conceived and though it is effective in a bustling, energetic manner, it does not succeed in creating quite the ideal linking of organ and strings we find in the *Prelude*. Yet, one suspects with several hearings that the work will grow on one. Certainly, Dr. Koussevitzky gives it a fine performance and the recording is realistically achieved. I, for one, welcome the acquisition of this work on records since it employed the unusual combination of organ and orchestra; there is considerable appeal in the sound of the organ mated to orchestral strings as we have it here.

—P.H.R.

**MUSIC OF RICHARD ROGERS:** played by Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra. Columbia set M-655, four discs, price \$4.85.

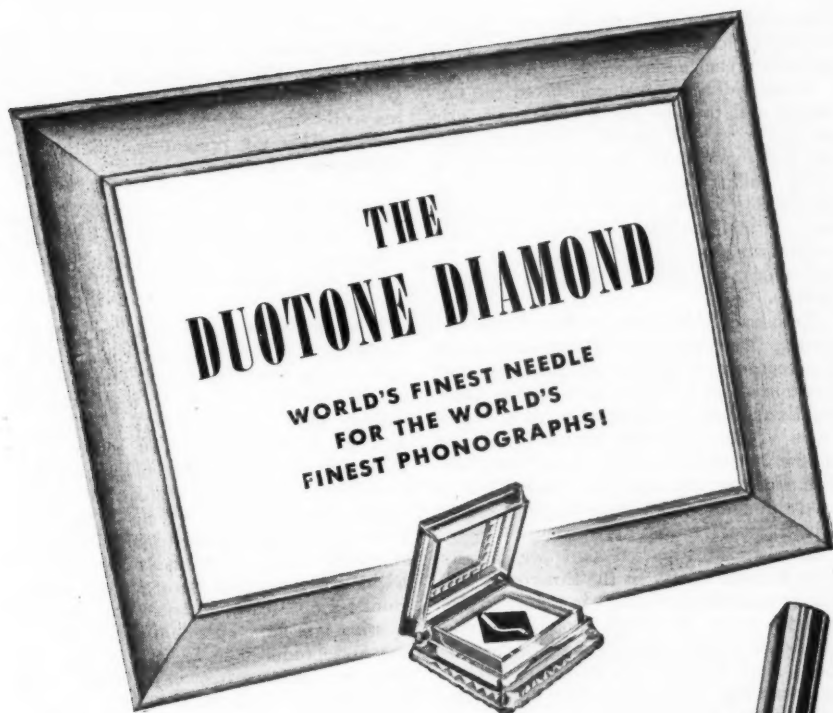
▲ Lest some forget that Richard Rogers is a product of America, Columbia has provided a facsimile of the American flag on the cover of the album. The public demands this sort of thing from Kostelanetz and it must be admitted he does a fine job. Some of us may tire of his silken strings, his lush treatment of familiar melodies, but the Kostelanetz audience (which is one of the largest record audiences known) would not have him change his technique. Per usual the Kostelanetz recording comes out of Columbia's top drawer. The selections here are: *My Heart Stood Still* from *A Connecticut Yankee*; *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World* from *Jumbo*; *It Might as well be Spring* from *State Fair*; *Blue Moon* and *Johnny One Note and Where or When from Babes in Arms*; *If I Loved You* from *Carousel*; *The Girl Friend* from the same; *There's a Small Hotel* from *On Your Toes*; *Lover from Love Me Tonight*; and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* from *On Your Toes*. —P.G.

**STRAUSS:** *Death and Transfiguration*, *Opus 24*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set M-or MM-613, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ The recording here is not as good as the best of the Philadelphia Orchestra, there are some bad solo instrument balances and in the loud climaxes far too much monitoring for the good of the music. Despite these facts, I would rate this version of Strauss' early tone poem a preferable job to either of the two sets made by Stokowski. Ormandy has always played Strauss music in a healthy, objective manner, and his conception of this score is musicianly and manly. One must consider the Ritter poem with its *malaise* which Strauss had written to describe his music. The fact that the poem was added after the music was completed does not alter the intentions of the composer's program. Ritter's poem is a true example of decadent romanticism and so is the music. Stokowski emphasizes and distorts the *malaise*, his poetic sentiment is closer to sentimentality than some of us like. There is no question that a great many people like what one critic has called a lurid treatment of the score. But I feel that many who think they like this sort of thing are really swayed by the sumptuousness of sound that Stokowski can get and which we find in his Victor set (not in the poorly recorded one made for Columbia). Had the present performance been recorded with the sumptuousness of sound we have had in previous Columbia issues (the Respighi *Pines of Rome*, for example) a lot more listeners one feels would have found just reason to discard the older performance in favor of this one both as a performance and a recording. —J.N.

**STRAVINSKY:** *Le Sacre du Printemps*; played by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, direction of Pierre Monteux. Victor set M- or DM-1052, four discs, price \$4.85.

▲ By now there is not much point discussing the merits and demerits of *Le Sacre*, since it has fallen into an accepted niche. Through the years it has enjoyed more notoriety than any of Stravinsky's works. Whenever a musical journalist wants a filler, the eventful premiere on May 29, 1913, can be told and retold; whenever two old balletomanes dicker over their cups, they talk of Nijinsky's



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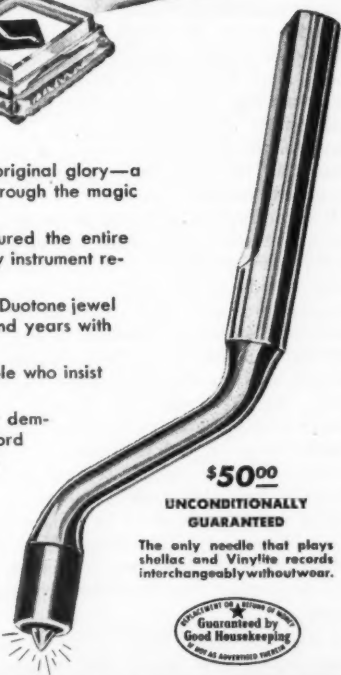


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rage, and Monteux' futile efforts in the pit, trying to conduct over the noise of an aroused French audience.

It was Monteux who conducted the premiere, and thus he has a proprietary grip on the score. Of course, Stravinsky himself has conducted a version with the New York Philharmonic; a certain amount of proprietorship can also be claimed for that set. In addition there is an old Stokowski version which, for the dated qualities of its recordings, if nothing else, need not concern us.

Technically, Monteux enjoys better recording than Stravinsky. The bass response is exceptional, with the tam-tam and other instruments of the percussion section coming through much better than in any previous version. Terrific climaxes, notably on the last side, are built up without any distortion on my machine, the balance is good throughout, and there is a high degree of instrumental fidelity.

It must be admitted that occasionally there is more clarity in the Stravinsky set. This is especially noticeable in the *Abduction* episode, where the flutes, woodwinds and trombones emerge with greater independence. Here, however, the difference in clarity is not due to the recording but to the mannerisms of the conductors. Monteux may feel that the over-all effect is superior when the individual lines are merged into the general pattern.

Interpretively it is difficult to recommend one above the other. Stravinsky, a conductor who generally gets the results he wants, conducts his version of *Sacre* with complete authority and a dry, rather epigrammatic sobriety. Monteux brings more color to it, and his treatment of the rhythmic patterns catches the wild, primitive effect. Under his baton the San Francisco Orchestra displays imposing virtuosity; enough, I think, to rank it with the country's leading groups. There is one reservation to what Monteux does: his tendency to reach the peak of a climax before its legitimate point, thus robbing it of a cumulative effect. That is a minor point, however, in view of the spirit and finesse that the French conductor brings.

It might be added that *Le Sacre* is by no means *passé*. The music still retains its primitive impact. While the medium is

highly sophisticated, a good parallel can be drawn between it and primitive-inspired paintings of Picasso. One does not have to go back to nature to imitate nature; and in his score Stravinsky has suggested the wild stirrings that are present—no matter how hidden—in all of us. —H.C.S.

VON SUPPÉ: *Fatinitzka—Overture*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 11-9261, price \$1.00.

▲ It takes Fiedler to turn in a clean-cut performance of a work like this that makes it seem momentarily more important than it is. He does not overplay or understate the swagger and brashness nor the sentiment of such music, but handles the whole in an alert and forthright manner. In his day, Franz von Suppé was a great favorite in Vienna and Germany. One suspects the Viennese may have looked upon him as another Offenbach, but he lacked the latter's originality and wit. Among von Suppé countless operettas, *Fatinitzka* was the first to bring him fame outside of Germany. It was first produced in Vienna in 1876 and given in London two years later. The Parisians heard it in 1879. Today, only the overture is remembered and one would have to do quite a bit of research to find out what its story was. The first half of the overture recalls both Mozart and Beethoven, the middle section has a Russian touch but one suspects the composer aimed for a bit of orientalism. The finale recalls Offenbach. The work is skillfully scored. Like all of the recordings of the Boston "Pops" the reproduction is excellent. —P.G.

WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger—Vorspiel*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction of Arturo Toscanini. Victor disc 11-9385, price \$1.00.

▲ There is almost everything that is musically satisfying in Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*. It is a sort of synopsis of the plot of the opera. The motif of the Mastersingers dominates the opening and near the end of the first record face we have the Love Motif and a bit of the *Prize Song*. The overture, we are told, presents a freely modified and enlarged, yet clearly discernable ex-

ample of the sonata form. The development section (beginning of side 2) gives us the caricature of the Mastersinger motif, representing Beckmesser, shrilly played by the woodwinds, contrasted with bits from Walter's *Spring Song*, then we have the mocking by the chorus of Beckmesser, then comes the working up in the recapitulation of the main themes of the opening with three themes artfully combined, the Love Motif in the treble, the fanfare of the Masters in the middle, and the Mastersinger motif in the bass. The ending is drawn from the end of the drama—where Walter and Sachs are crowned and the people sing in praise of Sachs and German Art. There are few things in music more satisfying than this prelude, it is one Wagner's greatest works. Had he written it only and not the opera, it would still have been one of his biggest moments in music.

I feel Toscanini's performance of this music surpasses all others. Recording perhaps has something to do with this, for though I have long admired the Beecham performance it does not have the intensity of spirit or the overall mastery of style I find here nor does it have the spacious reproduction. Someone once said that Toscanini has a profound identification with the quality of Wagner's music—this we have felt in his performance of the *Lohengrin* prelude, the *Immolation Scene* from *Goetterdaemmerung*, and many other pages from that composer's works. Not since Karl Muck's performance of this prelude have I heard it played more vitally, its dramatic eloquence more persuasively unfolded. And never on records have we had the inner voices of the music tellingly revealed. Toscanini builds climaxes that are truly thrilling, yet never theatrical. There are moments in the music that others have artfully brought to life in a memorable manner, as in Beecham's more caressing handling of the Love Music toward the end of side one, but I recall the late Lawrence Gilman's assertion that Toscanini "reminds us that song and drama interpenetrate; and his own excellent gift is that of blending beauty with vitality, loveliness with strength". And in the end, I find his evocative music-making effaces the memory of all others—here, as in the *Jupiter Symphony* of Mozart in January. —P.H.R.

March, 1947

## Concerto

**BRAHMS:** *Concerto in D minor, Opus 15*; played by Rudolf Serkin (piano) and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, direction of Fritz Reiner. Columbia set M- or MM-652, six discs, price \$6.85.

▲ To be reviewed next month.

**CHOPIN:** *Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21; Berceuse*; played by Artur Schnabel (piano) and the N.B.C. Symphony, direction of William Steinberg. Victor set M- or DM-1012, four discs, \$4.85.

▲ Both of Chopin's concertos are early works, and are forms that he never afterwards pursued. He was weak when it came to handling the complexities of sonata form, while the secrets of orchestration remained forever hidden to him. As concertos, judged by what Mozart and Beethoven accomplished

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ed, little can be said for them. But as piano pieces, as repositories for lovely melody, elaborate figuration, virtuosic keyboard writing—that is something else. The Chopin concertos always will have emotional appeal, and will be played as long as there are pianists who respond to color and romanticism.

One prior recording of this work is in the catalogues—Cortot's, released in August, 1939. Rubinstein here has the benefit of better recording; beside it, the Cortot set sounds muffled and inferior in tonal quality. The new set, however, is not the best that modern techniques can offer. In the upper reaches the piano sounds a little tinny, and it takes too great precedence over the orchestra even for a Chopin concerto.

Last month Rubinstein turned in one of his greatest recorded performances in Chopin's *B flat minor Sonata*. This time one does not grow as enthusiastic. The sonata is big, forceful, heroic, and Rubinstein's playing matched those attributes. The concerto, however, is a relatively slender work, and Rubinstein's massive attack seems a little misplaced. He was also successful, in the sonata, in handling running figures with expressive impact, but in this concerto the embroidery is apt to impress more as a technical feat than as musical expression.

Of Rubinstein's immense technique, one is made well aware, and Cortot cannot match him in this respect. Yet I feel that Cortot brings more of an aristocratic elegance to his performance. Not as brilliant, accurate or fast, he nevertheless phrases with more subtlety. Above all, he does not display the superficial brilliance that is so noticeable in Rubinstein's set. The latter is too great a pianist to pass off with a mere shrug, but certainly he could have played with greater restraint and less of an impulse to exhibit the qualities of his finger work.

A few minor differences are present. The new version cuts about seven bars of orchestral tutti at the very end of the first movement, while the pianist joins with the orchestra for the concluding chords (Chopin dropped the piano part a few measures before the end). The missing bars are present in Cortot's set, but in addition there are two measures of piano that Chopin never wrote. Both accompaniments are satisfactory, with Steinberg a little stiffer and more under the domination of the soloist's will. —H.C.S.

DVORAK: *Concerto in B Minor for Violoncello and Orchestra, Op. 104*, played by Gregor Piatigorsky, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy, conductor. Columbia set M- or MM-656, five discs, price \$5.85.

▲ This recording inevitably challenges comparison with the celebrated one made about ten years ago by Pablo Casals with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Georg Szell, the only other recording hitherto available to American record buyers as Victor Set 458. That is indeed a high mark to shoot at, as the gods smiled favorably on that memorable occasion. Everything was just about perfect. Let it be said at once that Piatigorsky's performance is little short of miraculous, and there is little to choose between his performance and that of the renowned Spanish master. But Szell infused more warmth and persuasiveness in the score than does Ormandy; moreover the orchestra played with more precision and was better recorded. There is something fuzzy or woolly in the present recording at times, although it is difficult to say just where the fault lies. But these are only minor blemishes.

A romantic and eclectic work, this concerto evinces little of the nationalistic traits usually found in Dvorak's compositions to a greater or lesser degree. It is said to have been written under the incentive furnished by Victor Herbert's playing of a cello concerto with the New York Philharmonic at a concert which Dvorak attended. Begun in New York in Nov., 1894, it was finished the following February. He had long been homesick, and his desire to return to his native land is strongly suggested in the nostalgic slow movement. Beautifully written for cello and colorfully orchestrated, there is little real gaiety in the work; and it strikes a serious note almost throughout its length. But it is never mawkish or lugubrious—the emotion is always restrained, as is always the case with a real masterpiece.

The first movement is rather free in form, although it has the conventional double exposition usually found in classical concertos. The slow movement is in the main poetic and meditative, with an idyllic main theme and a deeply felt middle section. The finale opens with a march-like theme, and is rich in melodic and rhythmic content. There

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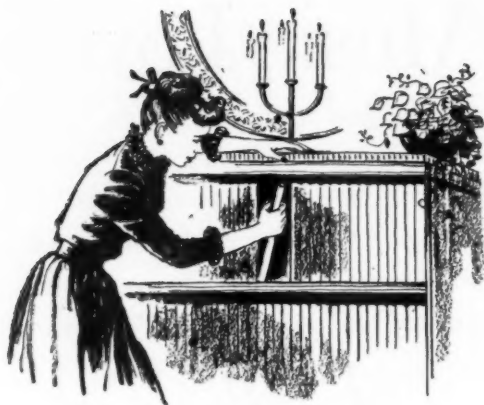
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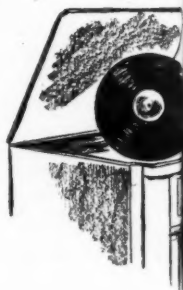
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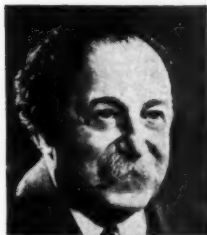
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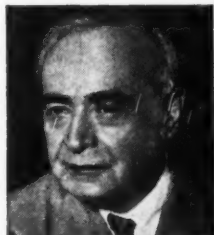
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are so many beauties scattered throughout the score that the concerto really begs description. It is the work of a composer, who, if perhaps not of the first rank, was one of the most spontaneous creative artists that ever lived, and who wrote as a bird sings. If not the greatest of all cello concertos (and many there are who think that it is), it certainly ranks high among the half dozen that we have come to know well. Brahms, on being confronted with the score for the first time, exclaimed: "Why the devil didn't I realize before this that one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had, I would have written one long ago!"

—H.S.G.

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### Instrumental

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**BIZET** (arr. Waxman): *Carmen Fantasia*; played by Jascha Heifetz (violin), with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Donald Voorhees. Victor disc 11-9422, price \$1.00.

▲ Mr. Franz Waxman has arranged an ostentatious fantasy mostly of Carmen's airs which Mr. Heifetz plays with dazzling virtuosity. It seems strange to hear the voice of Carmen through the violin, one would have thought the viola a more appropriate instrument. Some of the familiar airs lend themselves to treatment better than others—the *Séguedille* and the *Chanson Bohème*, for example—but the *Card Scene* seems completely out of place. This sort of thing heard once might prove diverting, but I wonder how it will wear in repetition. The orchestral background is capably handled and the recording is excellent. —P.G.

**CHOPIN**: *Introduction and Polonaise Brillante in C major, Op. 3*; played by Gregor Piatigorsky, (cello) and Valentin Pavlovsky (piano). Columbia disc 71889-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Chopin's *Alla Polacca* (as he originally called it) was composed in 1829 on a visit the young musician paid to Prince Radziwell, an amateur cellist. Chopin himself said of it: "It is nothing more than a brilliant salon piece, such as please ladies..." And his biographer, Niecks, goes on to remark: "On the whole we may accept

Chopin's criticism of his Op. 3 as correct. . . Indeed, there is very little in this composition—one or two pianoforte passages, and a *finesse* here and there excepted—that distinguishes it as Chopin's. The opening theme verges even dangerously to the commonplace. More of the Chopinesque than in the *Polonaise* may be discovered in the *Introduction* which was less of a *pièce d'occasion*. What subdued the composer's individuality was no doubt the violoncello which, however, is well provided with graceful cantilena."

Needless to say Piatigorsky and Pavlovsky play the piece with all the suavity and spirit it requires, and if they do not succeed in making it sound important, their performance is bound to give considerable pleasure. The recording is very good.

P.L.M.

**FRESCOBALDI**: *Arietta*; and **MILHAUD**: *Elégie*; played by Edmund Kurtz (cello) with Artur Balsam at the piano. Victor disc 11-9414, price \$1.00.

▲ Perhaps Piatigorsky's rich artistry prejudiced me this month, for I found Mr. Kurtz's playing far less impressive. But I made the mistake of placing his performance of the Milhaud piece on the turntable first and the cellist's tone seemed dry and singularly lacking in body. Moreover, the music did not impress me as stemming from a truly inspirational urge. The Frescobaldi *Arietta* is both tonally and expressively better played by the cellist. Its composer, who was one of the most distinguished organists of the 17th century, probably wrote this piece for his own instrument, but it might have been conceived for the cello so effectively does it sound. It is an ingratiating cantilena, which poises no problems to the soloist other than a pleasant tone and a smoothly flowing line, which Mr. Kurtz realizes. Mr. Balsam's accompaniments seem a little on the discreet side or maybe it is the fact that he is not given an equal balance with the soloist. —P.H.R.

**HUBAY**: *Hejre Kati* (*Hungarian Czardas Scenes*), *Opus 32, No. 4*; and **BALAKIREFF** (arr. Volpe): *Oh, Come to Me*; played by Mischa Elman (violin) and Leopold Mittman (piano). Victor disc 11-9423, price \$1.00.

▲Hubay was a famous violinist in his day and a noted teacher; among his pupils are Szigeti, Telmányi, Eddy Brown and Vecsey. Szigeti in an interview this past year told us that Hubay's musical taste was not profound. Certainly his musical compositions are not of any great import. The present piece opens in a sentimental vein and then goes into a typical Hungarian dance. The dance section is the best part. Balakireff's *Oh, Come to Me* is saccharine fare, the type of music that permits the violinist to show off the sweetness of tone he can produce, and this Elman does in what will undoubtedly be a widely appreciated fashion. I prefer the other piece, which Elman plays with more appreciable musicianship. The accompaniments of Mr. Mittman are tastefully rendered. The recording is excellent. —P.G.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Trio, Opus 67*; played by Dmitri Shostakovich (piano), D. Tzyganov (violin), and S. Shirinsky (cello). Compass Set C-102, five 10-inch discs (manual), price \$6.25.

▲The keynote to this work is found in its dedication. The score is marked to the memory of Ivan Sollertinsky, an eminent musicologist and friend of the composer. Shostakovich penned this work in the summer of 1944. In a memorial article, he wrote of Sollertinsky as one of his "best and closest friends". The plaintive sadness of the opening themes betokens a mood of sad thoughts or memories of his late friend. The music is characteristically Russian in its brooding melancholy. Gradually the composer alters the mood until towards the end of the first movement a lyrical utterance dispenses the somberness. There is a mocking gaiety in the short scherzo that follows, a compact little piece ingeniously contrived with effective harmonic and rhythmic alterations. The slow movement, in passacaglia form, is a moving piece of deep feeling in which the piano furnishes the ostinato. Nowhere in his chamber music has the composer given us as deeply felt and expressed a movement as this, which he leaves curiously suspended in air. The finale is deftly scored,



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with a telling use of plucked strings. Two themes of Hebrew origin are employed which give rise to new and attractive rhythmic effects, but these do not form the whole movement for the composer makes new use of the slow opening theme of the work, now scored in a Debussy-like manner, and the melancholy theme of the slow movement. The work ends on a somber note.

In my estimation, this is one of Shostakovich's best works; it has a more closely-knit texture than his symphonies and reveals a depth of feeling indicative of a maturity of development. Moreover, it reveals the composer as a fine pianist, one who performs with technical skill and feeling. His associate artists, two members of the Beethoven Quartet, are worthy partners. The recording is good though of the studio variety, and the surfaces of the records some of the best from the USSR. On the last side of the set, the composer is heard performing two preludes from his *Opus 34*, in *G minor* and *F sharp minor*. Tonally, Shostakovich is more persuasive in these pieces than most American pianists I have heard play them, but the little works convey very little to me, since at best they are fragmentary moods of scant thematic substance.

—P.H.R.

### Keyboard

COPLAND: *Piano Sonata, 1941* (five sides); *Our Town, Suite* (three sides); played by Leo Smit (piano). Concert Hall Society Set A2, four discs. By subscription only.

▲ Copland's sonata for piano was written as late as 1939 to 1941 and yet it harks back to the style of his *Piano Variations* (1930). If the present work does not exhibit the savagery of the earlier one, it does maintain the angularity of style and severity of purpose. It opens with clanging, dissonant chords, rising and falling, with no concession to a singing line. There is a groping quality to this music, and the structure is hard to follow since it does not have a regular melodic line. The second movement, ascherzo, stresses the metallic characteristics of the piano. The finale has a detached, reflective mood, as though the composer were lost in reveries

wandering about on the keyboard. Here there is richer tonal sonority. Midway, the music returns to the clanging opening of the work and then fades out in a meandering pattern of curiously detached chords with constantly shifting pedal.

This music is not related to the composer's *Appalachian Spring*, with its rhapsodic poetic beauty. Indeed, one could hardly term it a distant cousin, for it is acerbic and severe with only brief moments of poetic softness. It is not an easy work to follow on a first hearing.

The music of *Our Town* is easier to assimilate; it is simple and reflective, consonant rather than dissonant. Here, we have the Copland who renders into sound the homely sentiment of the average American, the nostalgic yearning for old faces, old scenes and old times. The present suite was arranged from the music the composer did for the motion picture *Our Town*. There are three short movements—*Story of Our Town*, *Conversation at the Soda Fountain*, and *The Resting Place on the Hill*. Undeniably, there is an impressionistic quality to all three pieces, moments of shifting harmonies and tonalities which recall Satie and Debussy, but these are fleeting. The music has the stamp of Americanism on it, its yearning quality is characteristic of so many people in small towns, its sweetly sad sentiment also. Somehow, the music calls to mind the poetry of Edgar Lee Masters', *The Resting Place on the Hill* might well have been inspired by *The Spoon River Anthology*. The harshness and severity of the sonata, in which the effort to be strongly masculine is impelled by angularity, rigor and dissonance, is replaced here by a manly tenderness which one cannot help but feel is a very real part of the composer's nature. Some may call this music sentimental, but others will enjoy it for what it really is—music of poetic sensitivity, expressing the nostalgic feelings of old and young who remember the familiar corners and places of an early small town existence.

Mr. Smit plays both works with conviction; he adopts a crisp, incisive style for the sonata and a more warmly sentient tone for the suite. There are times when the music of the sonata does not hold together as one would like it, times when one is too

conscious of the pianist's pedalling, but this may be what the composer wishes. He is said to be one of Copland's ablest interpreters. The recording is excellently accomplished and the surfaces of the plastic discs are consistently smooth and noiseless.

—P.H.R.

**FRENCH-PIANO MUSIC:** *Le Rappel des Oiseaux* (Rameau); *Troisième Gnosienne* (Satie); *Prelude (1913)*; *Menuet sur le nom de Haydn (1909)* (Ravel); *Carillon de Cythère* (Couperin); *Musette en rondo* (Rameau); *Idylle* (Charbrier); *Les Barri-cades mystérieuses* (Couperin); *Deuxieme Impromptu in F minor* (Fauré); played by Gaby Casadesus (piano). Vox Set 163, four 10-inch discs, price \$4.75.

▲ A short recital on records of French piano music from "ancient to modern" was a good idea. From the playing of *Pour le Piano*, one felt that Mme. Casadesus would have been the ideal performer, but the playing here, while musicianly, remains much too straightforward for its own good. One misses the nuancing of line, the pedal coloring that many of these pieces require for satisfactory interpretation. It may be that the recording, which was obviously accomplished in a studio, does not catch all the refinements of detail that the artist would provide in the concert hall. However, I cannot but feel that Mme. Casadesus' husband would have realized more subtle renditions of the music for his is a more refined style of playing. It must be admitted that Mme. Casadesus had devised a fine program, and I find reasons to rejoice that she has included Chabrier's lovely *Idylle* and the *Gnosienne No. 3* of Satie. Those who prefer the piano to the harpsichord will perhaps welcome the pieces by Couperin and Rameau, but one who realizes the charm and effects to be achieved on the older instrument will feel with us that the Kirkpatrick and Landowska performances of these works are more persuasively played.

—PG.

**ORGAN RECITAL:** *Ave Verum* (Mozart-Courboin); *Jesus, My Lord; Holy God, We Praise Thy Name* (Arr. Courboin); *Ave Maria* (Arcadelt-Courboin); *Adoration* (Joseph J. McGraht); *Silent Night* (Gruber-Courboin); *O Lord, I Am Not Worthy; Hail, Glorious Saint Patrick* (Arr. Courboin); played by Charles M.

Courboin on the organ of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, New York. Victor set M-1091, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ This set, we are told, is the first of a long series of recordings to be made by the popular Mr. Courboin on the organ of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Whatever the organist and Victor's repertory planners may have in mind for future releases, this set is obviously intended less for musicians and organists than for those who enjoy hearing the hymns of the Catholic Church played simply on the organ and other sacred selections transcribed for that instrument. There is a slight echo in the recording to remind us of the Cathedral atmosphere; the organ itself takes more kind-

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ly to reproduction than did the Wanamaker instrument on which so many of Courboin's recordings were made. —P.L.M.

**PROKOFIEFF:** *Music for Children, Opus 65*; played by Ray Lev (piano). Concert Hall Set AC (unlimited edition), three 10-inch discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Prokofiev's gift for writing music for young people was demonstrated in his *Peter and the Wolf*. He does not play down to the child but stimulates his imagination by ingenious rhythmic and harmonic effects, at the same time making his musical captions plausible. One agrees with the writer of the notes for this set, that although modern in character these pieces remind one of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. Prokofiev has an unusual gift for characterization; he creates a clever mood picture, and despite the modernism of the writing, these pieces are really simple in spirit. In his music of this kind, the composer achieves a common ground where the child and adult meet. For these pieces and *Peter and the Wolf* appeal to grownups as well as young people.

There are a dozen pieces in this set with titles such as *Morning; Evening; Moonlit Meadows; Rain and the Rainbow; Parade of the Grasshoppers; Promenade, Regrets; Fairy Tale*, etc. Some are almost too brief, but nonetheless clever tone-paintings.

It would be very easy to over-play these little works, to make them more sophisticated; it is to Miss Lev's credit that she keeps them simple and plays them with true artistic sensitivity. The recording is most gratifying in its realistic conveyance of tonal gradations. Since it is pressed on vinylite the surface sound is negligible.

—P.H.R.

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## VOICE

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• **BALFE:** *The Bohemian Girl—Then You'll Remember Me*; and **MARSHALL:** *I Hear You Calling me*; sung by Christopher Lynch (tenor), with orchestra, conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1276, price 75c.

▲ Mr. Lynch is widely exploited as John McCormack's protégé and successor, but

many of us who knew and admired the artistry of McCormack feel that the latter has no successor, leastways Mr. Lynch. The young tenor has admirable diction but his singing is too straight and lacking in variety of tonal coloring. Stylistically, he does not begin to approach McCormack who never would have been guilty of the slurring of line we find in the last verse of *I Hear You Calling Me*. Lynch lacks the refinement of phrasing of the great Irish tenor and the exquisite *mezzo voce*. McCormack would not have interpolated the high tone in the second verse of the Balfe aria. —P.H.R.

**HANDEL:** *The Messiah*; sung by Isobel Baillie (soprano); Gladys Ripley (contralto); James Johnston (tenor); Norman Walker (Basso); and the Huddersfield Choral Society, with The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Malcolm Sargent. Columbia set M-or MM-666, nineteen discs, price \$22.50.

Considering the overwhelming popularity of *The Messiah* it seems more than a bit odd that with this release the great oratorio reaches only its second complete (or virtually complete) recording. Perhaps the fact that hardly a town in this country (not to mention England) would consider letting Christmas go by any year without a performance of at least a portion of the work may be taken to indicate that the need for a recording is less urgent than is the case with other masterpieces of this kind. *The Messiah* is (or should be) a part of everyone's background; in it we need no education. Nevertheless a completely adequate and inspired performance on records might do wonders toward re-establishing the traditions of the work, perhaps destroying some of the exaggerations which have come to be regarded as traditional. So far as I know no one has as yet tried putting on a performance in the manner of Arthur Mendel, who for some years has been giving New Yorkers an opportunity to hear the choral Bach done with chorus and orchestra comparable in size to those for which Bach wrote. Just how Handel, so well known for so many years as an occasion for massing all the singers and orchestral musicians it is possible to engage, would take to this sort of treatment would make an interesting study. We have at least one recording of the tenor

recitative and aria, *Comfort Ye, My People* and *Every Valley Shall Be Exalted* beautifully sung by Aksel Schiotz (HMV DB 5239) with a small orchestra including a harpsichord. On the evidence of this sample I should like to hear the whole work done in that manner, but there seems little likelihood that I will have the opportunity. Ever since Mozart elaborated the orchestration for what was then modern performance, elaboration has been the rule. The new recording is done in the English festival tradition, although the Huddersfield Chorus was reduced to 150 singers for the occasion.

Since this is the usual manner of presenting *The Messiah* I cannot say that I am disappointed that Sargent presents it in this way. But there are a number of things about the performance which are disappointing. Sargent is hardly a conductor of revealing imagination, and he is not successful at all times in holding the forces under his baton to a perfectly poised and flowing rhythm. His phrasing is apt to be rather square. These things are the more evident if we turn back to the old set made by Sir Thomas Beecham with the B.B.C. Chorus and the London Symphony Orchestra (Columbia M-271). The Huddersfield Chorus is by all odds a better sounding organization—particularly impressive for the clarity and good tone in the lower voices—and not unnaturally they have benefited by splendid up-to-date recording. Yet where Sir Thomas appears to have imbued everybody concerned with his conception of Handel's work, the good folk of Huddersfield seem just to be singing another annual performance of *The Messiah*. There is plenty of admirable work to be enjoyed in the new set, and (which is, after all, the true test of a performance) we turn the phonograph off after the last side with the impression of having heard the music rather than the performers, yet it is not the reading of the work which we could point to as the definitive version to be copied by all young interpreters.

The soloists are a particular disappointment. To begin at the top, Isobel Baillie has done so many fine things for the phonograph that we ought to be willing to forgive her labored and none too accurate account of *Rejoice Greatly*. In the other more sustained solos she fares much better, and she is by all odds the best of the quartet. Gladys

Ripley's singing is rather tentative and tonally not altogether steady. Something similar may be said of James Johnston, who adds to the effect with some uncertain intonation. And Norman Walker sings his part adequately but with no very impressive conviction.



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Conviction is one quality for which Beecham's soloists were particularly notable. Dora Labbette's voice and style are in many ways similar to Isobel Baillie's, but for all the terrific tempo set by Sir Thomas she managed *Rejoice Greatly* with far better success. Muriel Brunskill's true English contralto was far steadier and firmer than Miss Ripley's, and she sang with fervor and imagination. And both Eisdell and Williams impressed with their authority. The use of *appoggiaturas* was more or less arbitrary in the Beecham set; in the Sargent they are all but eliminated, which to my mind is a mistake.

In a word, the main thing we miss in the new set is Beecham's decisive beat. Not infrequently he has his own ideas about tempo, yet he is always able to hold his musicians to his way of doing things. Given a few rehearsals he could probably make the new soloists sound nearly as good as the old, and certainly his chorus and orchestra were not in themselves extraordinary. The reproduction in the older set is still quite passable, though of course the new recording is incomparably better. —P.L.M.

**IRISH SONGS:** *Mother Machree* (Ball); *The Rose of Tralee* (Glover); *Macushla* (MacMurrough); *She Moved Through the Fair* (Arr. Herbert Hughes); *Kathleen Mavourneen* (Crouch); *The Minstrel Boy* (Moore); sung by James Melton (tenor) with RCA Victor Orchestra, direction of David Broeckman. Victor set M-1090, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲The various companies are regaling us these days with Irish songs appropriate to the middle of March. Mr. Melton's selection is rather a group of sentimental ballads than of folk songs, although there are three in the album which may be called traditional. The style of their delivery is perhaps closer to that of the late John McCormack than most present day tenors manage to come (and this includes the work of the great tenor's so-called successor). They are provided with an elaborate orchestral background, which is certainly not inappropriate and will unquestionably be relished by the audience for which they are intended. What does stand between this singer and the complete capturing of the McCormack

tradition is Melton's tendency to sing out, his lack of the essential intimacy and talk-iness. In such a song as *She Moved Through the Fair* I miss the narrative quality, the impression that the singer has a good story and can't help telling it. Of all the songs I liked *Kathleen Mavourneen* and *The Minstrel Boy* the best—although here the orchestral part is really overdone—because in them his open style is quite in keeping. Mr. Melton usually records well and this set is no exception. —P.L.M.

**ITALIAN ART SONGS:** *Caro mio ben* (Giordano); *Bella Fanciulla* (Falconieri); *Siciliana* (Pergolesi); *Dolce Madonna* (Anonymous); *Selve Amiche* (Caldara); *Pur Dicesti* (Lotti); *Amarilli* (Caccini); *Recitativo ed Aria* (Pasquini); sung by Giuseppe De Luca (baritone) with Pietro Cimara at the piano. Decca set V-1, three vinylite discs, price \$7.00

▲Not since the days of Battistini has a singer so late in his life appeared in public revealing a voice and an art which belie his three score years and ten. Unquestionably, the greatest musical phenomenon of our time is Maestro Toscanini, who on the threshold of eighty reveals that age has not dimmed his powers. But next to Toscanini, we have De Luca at seventy singing with a purity of line and phrase, with an almost impeccable legato that few singers half his age these days can equal. Decca deserves the everlasting gratitude of all record listeners that it got the noted baritone to perpetuate this recital of old Italian songs. This album offers a rare and rewarding musical experience; it is unhackneyed material, art songs that belong to the ages—like all great works of art they are timeless and enduring. I am reminded in this connection of some words that the English writer, Edward Carpenter once wrote, in regard to the endurance of art. He said: "A work of Art has to stand. It has to stand time. . . most of all the silent multitude of men's thoughts, emotions, experiences, perpetually gnawing at it, if anywhere they may find a weak spot. The greatest art is that which attracts most, and yet longest resists the corrosion of the thoughts which it attracts." The songs in this album belong to this type of art—familiarity does not

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dim their melodic beauty but instead enhances their enjoyment, particularly when they are well sung. And well sung they are in this album, for De Luca's artistry is, like these songs, unimpaired by time, emotions, and experiences. True, there are moments in *Pur Dicesti* and the florid Pasquini opus where the baritone reveals that some of the bloom of his voice has gone, that its flexibility is not quite all he might wish for it, but on the whole such moments are rare. Indeed, his *Pur Dicesti* stands up with most previous versions I have heard; it is better than Patti's. My own favorites of this Arietta are the McCormack record and an old one made by Onegni in 1924 for Polydor—the latter is one of her greatest records.

The *Siciliana* of Pergolesi is a pleasant surprise, this is an original, not the familiar *Siciliana* attributed to Pergolesi—*Tre giorni son che Nina*—which was written by Ciampi. Several of these songs are new to records and most welcome too. Space does not permit as long a discussion of the music as I should like, but suffice it to say the singing is the main consideration and it is of such a high order that I unhesitatingly recommend the album to all listeners who like great vocal artistry as well as great art songs. The recording is excellently realized and the vinylite surfaces are good. The composer, Pietro Cimara at the piano, gives the baritone splendid support. —P.H.R.

**OPERATIC ARIAS** sung by Ferruccio Tagliavini (tenor) with the EIAR Symphony Orchestra, direction of Ugo Tansini. Vol. I: *La Bohème*—*Che gelida manina* (Puccini); *L'Arlesiana*—*Ela solita storia* (Cilea), Cetra disc BB25021; *La Sonnambula*—*Prendi l'anel ti dono* (Bellini); *Falstaff*—*Dal labbro il canto* (Verdi), Cetra disc BB25022; *I Lombardi*—*La mia letizia infondere* (Verdi); *L'Amico Fritz*—*Ed anche Beppe* (Mascagni), Cetra disc BB25026; *La Tosca*—*Recondita armonia* and *E lucevan le stelle* ((Puccini), Cetra disc BB25040. Vol. II: *Manon*—*Il sogno* (Massenet); *Mignon*—*Addio Mignon* (Thomas), Cetra disc BB25119; *Rigoletto*—*Parmi veder le lagrime* (Verdi); *L'Elisir d'Amore*—*Una furtiva lagrima* (Donizetti); Cetra disc BB25058; *II Barbiere di Siviglia*—*Ecco ridente in cielo* (Rossini);

*La Tosca*—*O dolce mani* (Puccini), Cetra disc BB25181. Issued by the Liberty Music Shop, New York. Prices—Album I, \$14.00; Album II, \$10.75—single discs \$3.25

▲ In November 1944, we published the first interview to appear in an American music magazine with Tagliavini, who was then singing in Rome and was highly regarded as an operatic tenor by the Italian opera-going public and our own soldiers. That interview was secured for us by Pvt. Leo Goldstein (of Chicago), a dauntless music lover who managed somehow—despite his position in the Army of Occupation—to get around. Goldstein's and other's prediction at that time that Tagliavini would undoubtedly arrive at the Metropolitan Opera after the war has been borne out; the tenor made his debut at that edifice on January 10 in *La Bohème*. Chicago operagoers heard him earlier.

Signor Tagliavini is a singularly gifted lyric tenor, who can float a true pianissimo that few tenors have had since the days of Bonci and Schipa. He sings naturally and easily in the Italian manner but not without some of the offending mannerisms we associate with Italian tenors. At the Metropolitan he disclosed a straightforward style, a vibrant, ringing tonal quality in forte passages, and a caressing quality in pianissimo, which latter was more judiciously employed in the opera house than on these records. To judge from his records, there was an appreciable evidence of artistic growth in his singing heard in the Metropolitan.

In his interview with Pvt. Goldstein, the tenor frankly stated he "did not like too well the recordings he made in 1940-41." His performance of the arias from *La Tosca* and of the complete *L'Amico Fritz* (a Cetra set) he contended "were outstanding representative of his work." The tenor's honest self-criticism may well be leveled at a stylistic over-use of pianissimo singing in his recordings, which tends to monotony. However, his musicianship is admirable in all of his records, as is also his diction. Since the numbers on his records have been altered in recent times by Cetra, we do not know the date of the recording of all of his arias. We do know the *Bohème* came late in 1941; it is well sung but he does a better job today. His *L'Arlesiana* is too sup-

pressed and does not replace Schipa's record. The arias from *L'Elisir d'Amore* and *II Barbiere* were the first listed in the Cetra catalogue; they date from 1940, but have been recoupled. My own preference lies with his *Bohème*, his *I Lombardi*, his *Tosca* aria from Act I—the other has too many sobs for my liking—and the one from *Rigoletto*. ■ Signor Tagliavini does not always efface the memory of others, he does emerge as a gifted singer who is deserving of the approbation which has been bestowed upon him. His singing recently on the Telephone Hour was a joy to the ear and more artistic than in these records.

The recording here is generally well contrived, with a good balance between the voice and a first-rate orchestra. The placement of the singer in relation to the microphone is not, in my estimation, as ideally arranged as it is on our domestic records, for while his pianissimo singing is tonally ingratiating his forte tones, in comparison, are often far too strident and blatant. One wishes the tenor could make some recordings in this country, but it is rumored his contract with Cetra will not permit this.

—P.H.R.

**A PROGRAM OF SONGS:** *How the King Went Forth to War*; (Koenemann); *Song of the Volga Boatmen*; *O You Vanya*; *Along the Petersky*; *They Don't Allow Masha to Go beyond the River*, (Russian folk songs); sung by Fedor Chaliapin (basso). Compass Set C-52, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.75.

▲ The new Compass company, whose recordings are imported from Russia, has done a clever thing in releasing this program of Chaliapin songs at a time when so many standard discs dating back a few years are impossible to obtain. There is nothing here which the great basso did not record for Victor, or Victor's European affiliates, but whether a single one of them could be gotten today is another question. As a matter of fact, so far as I know, two of the folk songs appear for the first time among the singer's electrical recordings.

According to Bauer's *Historical Records*, *How the King Went Forth to War* headed the first list of the records Chaliapin made for G & T (Moscow, 1901) and it appears again among those made in St. Petersburg in 1908.

There was another acoustic version released by Victor in the early 1920's, and finally an electrical recording (HMV DB 1068). We may, therefore, safely conclude that this little drama, in which the pomp and ceremony of the departure and return of the king is contrasted with the meaningless death of the peasant marching off with him, was a great favorite with the artist. The new version is divided into two sides; the small orchestra breaks forth with chimes at the climax, and the singer elects to sing the high alternative ending. *The Song of the Volga Boatmen* was, of course, practically Chaliapin's property, and it too was recorded a number of times, most recently in Tokio in 1936 (Victor 14901). *Down the Petersky* (a tune which served Stravinsky in *Petrouchka*) has been listed in both acoustic and electrical versions (most recently Victor 1557). But for *O You Vanya* and *They Don't Allow Masha to Go Beyond the River* we must return to the series of unaccompanied folksongs he made for HMV around 1910. They are done here in similar manner.

Certain things we could always expect from Chaliapin—vitality and drama—and these qualities are not lacking here. Since these records were made toward the end of his life it is not surprising that they lack

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the vocal freshness, the poise and the complete dramatic grasp which contributed so magnificently to his greatness. Nor is it to be wondered at that the recording is generally less satisfying than that of Victor and HMV, with their long experience and their superior materials. But these considerations do not alter the fact that these are probably the only records of these selections to be had at this time, and that they are well worth owning. P.L.M.

SCOTT: *Lullaby*, Op. 57, no. 2; BUCKY *Hear the Wind Whispering*; sung by Marian Anderson (contralto) with piano accompaniments by Franz Rupp. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1260, price 75c.

▲ The popularity of Cyril Scott's *Lullaby* is easily accounted for by the easy rise and fall of its flowing melody. The text, though it is by no less a poet than Christina Rossetti, is extremely simple, hardly more than the occasion for such a melody as Scott has provided. Whether or not the song is worth singing depends entirely on how one sings it. Miss Anderson has a voice capable of floating appropriately in such melodic lines, but she lacks the one thing which could lend these lines true distinction—that ability to swell and diminish which the Italians call *messa di voce*. Consequently the phrases are not molded and curved as they might be. The voice itself is lovely enough in quality to justify the singing, yet it misses by this little being very much lovelier. The companion song is in strong contrast. The singer evidently believes in it very seriously and earnestly, for she pronounces its message with a conviction not always characteristic of her singing. It may be that she makes the musical setting sound rather more important than it actually is; yet in its way this is one of Miss Anderson's most worthwhile recordings. —P.L.M.

SPIRITUALS: *Set Down, Servant* (Arr. R. Shaw); *Soon-a Wül Be Done* (Arr. William L. Dawson). Collegiate Chorale, direction of Robert Shaw. Victor ten-inch disc, 10-1277, price 75c.

▲ Mr. Shaw's is a virtuoso chorus, and these two spirituals are arranged in the virtuoso tradition. A feature of the first side is the rhythmical handclapping which serves as a kind of accompaniment. Of course this is in the authentic spirit of the thing, for

spirituals as well as work songs are often thus accented in unstudied performance. We are told, however, that it took some extended rehearsing to get the Chorale sufficiently perfected in this feature of their presentation to begin recording. Two excellent soloists make a real contribution to the success of this little disc 11-9262, price \$1.00. —P.L.M.

VERDI: *Rigoletto: Pari siamo; Cortigiani, vil razza dannata*; sung by Leonard Warren (baritone) with RCA Victor Orchestra, direction of Frieder Weissmann. Victor disc 11-9413, price \$1.00.

▲ In a performance of *Rigoletto* the music of the title role is practically surefire for any singing actor able to cope with its purely technical demands. But taken out of their contexts, the celebrated monologues and diatribes are perhaps as exacting as any music in the baritone repertoire. *Pari siamo* can easily fall apart and become a complete bore, and *Cortigiani* ruined when shouting is substituted for dramatic and impassioned vocalism. Mr. Warren has no need to shout, for his voice is a big and sonorous one. He does not, however, give us much in the way of vocal characterization in either selection, being content to rely altogether on the tonal richness of his exceptional instrument. His diction is by no means unclear, yet it wants a little pointing up to make it carry all the conviction the situations demand. In the subtle art of singing there are many mansions; Mr. Warren is at home in several though not all of them. The orchestration in the final *cantabile* section of the *Cortigiani* scene, with its instrumental solos, poses a special problem for the sound engineers which has not been met with complete success in this recordings. In giving each instrument prominence behind the voice they have not achieved perfect clarity. Otherwise the record is mechanically excellent. —P.L.M.

## Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 194)

plete recordings of operas—*Andrea Chenier*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and *Un Ballo in Maschera*—in which Gigli is the principal singer. Whether or not Gigli was an active member of the Fascist party does not preclude the fact that he is one of the greatest singers of our time, and people interested in musical

art will hardly be disposed to think of him as an individual when they are listening to him as an artist. This sort of thing can be argued *pro* and *con*, but in the final analysis people generally consider the artist before the individual. We have always felt the less we knew about an artist personally the more enjoyment we acquired from his art.

All this controversy and talk about opera shows there is great public interest in operatic entertainment. An Italian reader in Hamilton, Ontario, writes us that Mr. Miller forgot John Charles Thomas record of the aria from *Andrea Chenier* in his review of Merrill's last month; he also points out that Merrill is guilty of some bad mistakes in the Italian language—especially in the use of feminine endings instead of masculine ones. Apparently Italian singers can be just as guilty or careless about such matters because a re-hearing of the recording of *Eri tu* from *Un Ballo in Maschera* made by the famous Italian baritone, Mario Ancona (Victor's Heritage Series No. 15-1002), reveals alterations in words and several pronunciations which are debatable. Of all the recordings of this aria that we have heard none surpasses in our estimation the performance by Pasquale Amato (Victor 88464 or 6040). An ideal disc, representing this artist in Victor's Heritage series, would contain his *Eri tu* and his *Credo* from *Otello*—on records he remains unmatched in these two famous operatic scenes.

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The Haydn Society in Boston, of which we spoke last month, has decided to record for its first album two hitherto unrecorded symphonies. Dr. Fritz Stiedry will conduct the chamber orchestra which will be used. A number of people wrote in about the proposed recording of a Haydn opera—a really charming score. One New York reader—Mr. Theodore Front—expressed the thoughts and desires of many when he pointed out that he thought most people will be interested in music of Haydn that was more familiar, music like his symphonies. "As to your intention of doing *The Seasons*," he said, "why not *The Creation* first of all? It is a much more important work and does not exist on records, except for a few excerpts, whereas there is a new recording—although not a good one—of *The Seasons*". The recording of *The Seasons*, made by

Cetra in Italy, of which we spoke last month, is unquestionably not as good as we might have wanted it, but it is not a bad performance by any means and one cannot dismiss it lightly. The choral singing is not as good as the solo singing. It is unfortunate that the set is priced so high—\$3.25 a disc.

### New Subscription Rates

The increased costs of production, which has more than doubled in the past two years, has made it essential for us to lift our subscription rates. The new rates will be \$2.75 for 12 months and \$4.75 for 24 months. This will go in effect on April 1st. Renewals will be accepted until July 1st at the old rate of \$2.50 for 12 months and at \$4.50 for 24 months.

### BOOK REVIEW

(Continued from page 200)

ing it into ten-year periods). Haydn's output, like that of most creative artists, actually falls into three periods: that of growth (1750-1771), that of maturity (1771-1786) and that of mastery (1786-1803).

One point must be brought up in connection with Geiringer's book. Between 1879 and 1884 a Croatian, by name Franz Kuhac, published a volume in three installments entitled "South Slavonic Folk-songs" and in 1881 issued a pamphlet on "Joseph Haydn and the South Slavonic Folksong". In the latter Kuhac attempted to prove that Haydn was a Croat and not of pure German stock, printing many examples of Croatian melodies alongside those by Haydn. In 1894 Sir Henry Hadow, the eminent English musicologist, discovered this pamphlet in the library at Oxford. Although he could not read Croatian, he was immediately struck by the similarity of these musical examples, many of Haydn's melodies being practically identical with the folk melodies. He had the book translated, and his researches along these lines led to the publication in 1897 of his "A Croatian Composer", in which he goes to some pains to prove his contention. Geiringer, a Viennese, refutes Kuhac-cum-Hadow; but the evidence of the latter is certainly convincing, if only circumstantial. —Henry S. Gerstle

# In The Popular Vein

By Enzo Archetti

● Bobby Sherwood and his Orch. (Capitol 286) play *Sherwood's Forest*, a piece listed as an original by Bobby which sounds like a mixture of Ellington and Raymond Scott. The work has merits but it does not stack up like a good Ellington or Scott. *'Least that's my Opinion* (reverse face) is more legitimate jazz but it's on too big a scale for its own good.

A good Benny Goodman disc which strikes a happy medium between real jazz and popular music is Columbia 37077 — *Pity the Poor Lobster* and *Love Doesn't Grow on Trees*. There's a little of each for everybody with the first piece in the lead for interest and musicianship.

Frank De Vol and His Orch. (Capitol set 31) under a general caption of *Memory Waltzes* plays in the Kostelanetz manner seven waltz tunes like *Parle moi d'amour*, *Three O'Clock in the Morning*, *Wonderful One, I'll See You Again*, from *Bittersweet*, *One Night of Love*, etc. These versions of favorite tunes are not for dancing but for those who like such things elaborated and oozing with sentiment.

Victor has turned out an excellent cross-section of the tuneful Berlin hit show, *Annie Get Your Gun* (set C-38), with Al Goodman and his Orchestra, Maxine and Jimmy Carroll, Audrey Marsh, Earl Oxford, The Mullen Sisters, and the Guild Choristers. All the tunes are here arranged two to a side in what Victor calls its Double Feature records. The recording is excellent.

Andy Russell, the Pied Pipers, and Paul Weston and his Orch. (Capitol 342) are smooth as silk in *I'll Close my Eyes* and *It's Dreaming*. Here's one for the girls to swoon over.

First there was *Symphony*, now it's *Sonata*: the pattern is the same — dripping sentiment, soft strings and supporting woodwinds. With some it cannot fail. Jo Stafford does well by *Sonata* on Capitol 337 and also with *Through a Thousand Dreams* — much in the same mood.

Peggy Lee with Dave Barbour and Orch. (Capitol 343) do a peppy and effective lament in boogie-woogie, *Everythin's Movin' Too Fast*. Flip-over, *It's Lovin' Time* is slow and sentimental, intimately sung, well supported.

Every once in a while Wingy Manone tries for another *Capri*. He comes close with his burlesque on *Besame Mucho* (Capitol 347). The words are his, of course, and they are sung in his usual gravel-throated manner. Beat is solid. *Paper Doll* (reverse face) is more strictly New Orleans jazz — but solid!

Martha Tilton with Dean Elliott and Orch. (Capitol 345) is at her best in *Connecticut* and

*How are things in Glocca Morra*. *Connecticut* should turn out to be a hit. The other side is a nostalgic bit from the hit show, *Finian's Rainbow*.

A typical crop of Dinah Shores, well handled as usual, are *For Sentimental Reasons* and *You'll Always be the One I Love* (Columbia 37188); *My Be Ami and I'll Close my Eyes* (Columbia 37213); *Sooner or Later* from *Song of the South* and *And So to Bed* (Columbia 37206).

As only Xavier Cugat can do it — *La Ola Marina* (Gururacha) and *Yo Te Amo and That's That* (Rhumba) (Columbia 37163) and *Touradas en Madrid* (Paso Doble) and *Morena* (Paso Doble) (Columbia 37198). Once around with any of these and you'll more than sprain your sacroiliac.

Les Brown and his Orch. (Columbia 37153) are neat in *Sooner or Later*, but *Years and Years Ago* is a travesty. Toselli's *Serenade* may not be great music but it does not deserve the treatment it is receiving from popular writers. Spike Jones and his City Slickers make an effort to bring back the famous Okeh Laughing Record in the *Jones Laughing Record* (Victor 20-2023). Jones gets results, but when it's all over one wonders what all the hilarity was about. The old Okeh was a bit more infectious, as I recall it. You can skip the reverse face — *My Pretty Girl* — which is very conventional stuff for Spike.

The atomic Betty Hutton has a "made-to-order" in *On the Other End of a Kiss* (Victor 20-2012) to which she does full justice. Reverse face *Don't Tell Me That Story* — starts like 99 per cent of today's popular ballads, and coming from Betty is a bit of a disappointment which in the last half she manages to set right.

The Tchaikovsky concerto has been raided again for another theme and the result is not bad. *Once Upon a Moon* bids fair to be another hit and it will probably be done to death within a few months. There's a change in rhythm which doesn't spoil the original too much. Listening to Elliott Lawrence and his Orch. (Columbia 37199) play this piece, I couldn't help but think what a popular song writer Tchaikovsky might have been today. The coupling here is Friml's *Sympathy* played as jump music — very coarse and loud.

Two top notch Benny Goodman discs — *Benjie's Bubble* and *A Gal in Calico* (Columbia 37187), and *Hora Staccato* and *Man Here Plays Fine Piano* (Columbia 37207). The surprise in the batch is *Hora Staccato*, in which the violin part has been transcribed to the clarinet and the whole made over into a fast jazz piece. It's surprising how little of its original character and spirit is lost. Goodman proves again what a master he is on his instrument, and hearing this disc one feels he should stick to this sort of fare and not try Brahms. The reverse face is a sort of musical biography and tribute to Joe Bushkin, the pianist. Naturally, the piano gets the lion's share, but the others in the group have their innings. This piece should make a

good dance number. *Benjie's Bubble* is another Goodman-Bushkin opus which moves at breakneck speed with some good piano and clarinet work. Based on a Sousa march, whose title escapes me for the moment, it is first-rate jazz improvisation. The calico gal has bounce but not much musical interest — it's slickly done but too conventional.

One of the best Gene Krupa's in a long time is Columbia 37209 containing *It's a Good Day and The Slow Mosquito*. The last, built on little more than a riff, turns out to be less funny than its title but has good rhythm.

Woody Herman and his Orch. (Columbia 37197) is a smoothie with everybody in top form. Reverse — *Sidewalks of Cuba* — is jazz in the better sense of the word but hardly outstanding; it rambles and gets too noisy.

After *That's What I Like about the South*, Phil Harris was typed. *Dark Town Polka Club* (Victor 20-2075) is cut from the same cloth — not uninteresting. It's backed up with *Woodman Spare that Tree*. Recording is very forward.

Henri Reni and his Orch. (Victor 25-0075) smoothly play a smooth tango — *Adios, Pampa mia!* Reverse — *Mexican Hat Dance* — is an arrangement by Henri which has lost some of its danceable character but is nonetheless good listening.

*Steamroller*, by Billy Butterfield and his Orch. (Capitol 335), is another *Cement Mixer*. Its partner, *Jalousie*, is more straightforward dance music with some nice trumpet and piano by Billy and Bill Stegmeyer.

*Ain't that Just like a Woman and Horizontal* — Pat Flowers and his Rhythm (Victor 20-1980) — in not too inspired boogie-woogie, dependent for effect more on words than on music. You won't miss much if you skip this.

*Endie*, by Louis Armstrong and his Orch., coupled with *Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans*, by Armstrong and his Dixieland Seven, are souvenirs of the forthcoming picture, *New Orleans*. You've heard songs and treatments like *Endie* many times before and the Armstrong presence doesn't make this any better than the usual run of the mill. The other side promises more than it gives; with its lineup it should have been good but instead it moves with leaden feet.

Tunes from the picture *The Fabulous Dorseys* — *At Sundown and To Me* — played by Tommy Dorsey and his Orch. (Victor 20-2064) offer surprisingly little Dorsey trombone for a disc played by him. But the now familiar style is there and in the perennial *Sundown* it is very pleasant. More than just a souvenir of the picture.

A Goodman and his Orch. (Victor 28-0411) in an arrangement of Tiomkin's score of *Duel in the Sun* makes the music sound pleasant and the arrangement is effective. Even apart from the film and without knowing the action, this parade of selections is well contrived and holds interest since the music is atmospheric. A thoroughly good job by Goodman backed by first-rate recording.

Herbie Field and his Orch. (Victor 20-2054): *Nocturne* — Ellingtonesque; *Cherokee* — good jump music. Playing and recording are excellent.

*Pee-Wee Russell Jazz Ensemble* (Disc album 632) and *Jazz at the Philharmonic, Vol. 4* (Disc album 504) (see January issue for titles and personnel). Both important contributions in the interest of good jazz, these sets are sincere efforts to record for posterity one of the aspects of true, improvisational jazz. This is not to say however, that they are only of historical interest. The Russell set is richly rewarding to anyone who will take the trouble to listen with an open mind. If one has never heard Pee Wee play, one may be inclined to write him off, at first hearing, as a noisy, raucous-voiced clarinetist. But those who know him think differently. His style is strange, his tone is coarse, but his is a sincere voice which lives and breathes the true jazz spirit. He is at his best in slow, discursive numbers like *Muskogee Blues*, but he can be strangely exciting with his rasping, rough tone in faster numbers. He must be heard to be believed and once heard, you are convinced. Disc has assembled a lot of good men to back Pee Wee, men who understand the spirit of good jazz improvisation and who contribute on their own ideas and technique in keeping with the over-all picture and intent.

*Jazz at the Philharmonic* is an extension of the series of on the spot recordings engineered by Norman Grantz. Only two numbers are presented: a traditional blues and *Lester Leaps In*, a fast one. These records have all the faults of a hall recording — poor balance, bad record breaks, and audience noise, but for virtues they have spontaneity, sincerity, and genuine excitement. The men play as they feel at the moment and they may never again play exactly like this. I'd say these discs preserve some rare jazz moments, moments in which men and music are in tune with each other and inspiration flowed freely. It would be difficult and I think unfair to single out any one musician as outstanding, for each in his own way contributes much to the whole. I wish I could be enthusiastic about Disc's recording and surfaces. They certainly don't match the music. The surfaces do not compare with the best, or for that matter the second-best, available today, and the recordings, even allowing for difficulties and uncertainties of an on the spot affair, are only average.

Mischa Boor and his Continental Orch. (Victor 25-0076) gives the authentic touch to *Czardas* by Monti — dash and pep — coupled to first-rate playing. *The Day Will Come* (Benatzky) (reverse) is probably best known as *Angoisse d'amour*. This is a lilting waltz piece, also well played.

Etta Jones sings two songs from and for Harlem — *Osculate Me Daddy and Mean To Me* (Victor 20-1941). Suggestive lyrics, fair singing, and only so-so orchestral backing by J. C. Heard and his Orch. Nothing to get excited about.

Julia Lee and her Boy Friends (Capitol 320) bring us lamenting blues — one slow, one fast — *When a Woman Loves a Man* and *Julia's Blues*. The first drags, the second rocks — especially in the instrumental parts. Coarse voice, but not inappropriate.

Geechie Smith and his Orch. (Capitol 332) produce two gut bucket blues with a solid beat — *Got You On my Mind* and *Let the Good Times Roll*. The words are good but the asides by the various instruments are wonderful. If you want to hear where Phil Harris draws his inspiration listen to the vocal parts of the second piece. The orchestra sure swings. Highly recommended — for all except Harry James fans.

Jessie Price and his Orch. are heard in assorted blues — with a feeling: *I Ain't Mad at You* and *I'm the Drummer Boy* (Capitol 348) and *Sweet Man Blues* and *Sleepy Baby Blues* (Capitol 326). The words are important, because like all the words of true blues, they have a double meaning. Instrumental part's fine and the rhythm is grand.

If you want to hear some authentic, unrefined Blues, look up Columbia 37155 — *Screaming and Crying Blues* and *She's a Truckin' Little Baby* by Blind Boy Fuller with guitar and washboard accompaniment. Guitar is prominent and effective. This is only for listeners who have had long experience with blues in the original.

Big Bill and his Chicago Five give us *I'm Gonna Move to the Outskirts of* and *Hard Hearted Woman* (Columbia 37196), and *Tell Me Baby* (Columbia 37088), latter backed up with *I Feel so Good* by Big Bill with piano, guitar and washboard accompaniment. On Columbia 37164, Big Bill with instrumental accompaniment does *You Got the Best Go* and *Cell No. 13 Blues*. Though listed as a blues singer — Big Bill shouts more than he sings but that goes with his kind of numbers. It's part of the technique of putting over the punch lines, and it gets results. The group backing him is first-rate. The smaller group is better than the Chicago Five, it fits the picture better and the vocal ejaculations from the group are a delight. Good red meat — but not for timid stomachs.

A different kind of blues — as different as the black man is from the white is heard in *Take Away those Blues around my Heart* and *Kansas City Blues* by Gene and Wiley (Columbia 37216). This kind of lamenting never seems to get below the surface — it's not convincing.

If *Open the Door, Richard!* isn't anathema to you by this time, you'll find Count Basie's version entertaining (Victor 20-2127). It's amusingly done. *Me and the Blues* (other side) is a disappointment coming from the Count.

*Music of Sigmund Romberg: Will You Remember?* (from *Maytime*); *One Kiss* (from *New Moon*); *Romance*; *The Desert Song* (from *The Desert Song*); *When I Grow Too Old To Dream* (from *The Night Is Young*); *Deep In My Heart, Dear* (from *The Student Prince*);

*Song of Love* (from *Blossom Time*); *Auf Wiedersehn* (from *Blue Paradise*); Andre Kostelanetz and His Orchestra. Columbia Album M635 — 4-10".

● Just the kind of a set to place in your automatic player as pleasant accompaniment for your dinner or as background music for conversation. The thrice familiar melodies will positively not give you dyspepsia nor interfere with any discussion. Played in the well-known Kostelanetz manner and excellently recorded.

*Opera In Vout: A Groove Juice Symphony*; Slim Gaillard and Bam Brown. Disc Album 505. 2-10" discs, \$2.89.

● This is another on-the-spot recording engineered by Norman Granz. Don't crack a brain cell over the title: it's nonsense. The whole thing is an excuse for some slam bang swing by Slim (of Slim and Slam fame) and Bam (of no particular previous fame) on guitar and bass. Such stuff can be grand fun in the flesh but is it really worth having on records? I don't think so. It loses much of its spontaneity and zest — especially when the recording is only so-so and the surfaces are so bad.

*Songs of Erin*; sung by Kate Smith, with Orchestra conducted by Jack Miller. Columbia Album C-116, 4-10".

● Very timely if not very Irish! The singing lacks the characteristic Irish lilt and some of the songs are synthetic but the effort is wholesome, sincere, and enjoyable. In few words — this album is Kate Smith. Personally, I think she is best in *Molly Malone* and *That's An Irish Lullaby* from Bing Crosby's *Going My Way* — two songs which are ages apart in style and spirit. But she is enjoyable, too, in *Where the River Shannon Flows*, *Mother Machree*, *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling*, *Machushla*, *My Wild Irish Rose*, and *A Little Bit of Heaven*. She has excellent support from Jack Miller and the Columbia engineers.

*Finian's Rainbow: Songs*; sung by Audrey Marsh, Jimmy Carroll, Jimmy Blair, The Deep River Boys, and The Guild Choristers, with Russ Case and his Orchestra. Victor Album P-167, 4-10".

● A delightful story, which just misses being one of the cleverest satires the stage has seen in years, and a delightful score by Burton Lane — all very well presented by a fine group of artists. All the good numbers are here: *How Are Things In Glocca Morra?* *Old Devil Moon*, and *Something Sort of Grandish* plus several others (eight in all) which will surely delight equally as much on better acquaintance. Victor can very well be proud of the recording job. The album is recommended without reservation.

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